

REMARKS

Prior to an examination on the merits of the above-identified patent application, please enter the foregoing amendments.

Claims 17-35 are now pending in the above-identified patent application, as presented by the instant Preliminary Amendment. Claim 17 is the single claim presented in independent form.

The present application represents the U.S. National Phase of P.C.T. Application No. PCT/DE99/03336, filed October 14, 1999, and claiming foreign priority on the basis of a corresponding Federal Republic of Germany patent application, filed December 15, 1998.

The claims being entered via the present Preliminary Amendment are intended to substitute for Claims 1-16 of the P.C.T. international application, as amended on January 25, 2001. An English translation of the amended disclosure and claims is being concurrently filed.

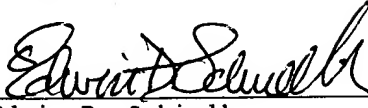
New Claims 17-35, which have been drafted in conformance with U.S. claim practice. Various formal amendments have also been entered to the Specification, and an Abstract for the application, on a separate sheet of paper, is enclosed.

The application is now in condition for a full examination on the merits.

Accordingly, an early examination on the merits and allowance are, therefore, respectfully requested and earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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